

The Tangent Quattro Table-Top Internet Radio

By Larry Van Horn

Imagine sitting in your den in United States and listening to a morning drive time program from Capital FM 98.4 in Nairobi, Kenya. Then, if you want to listen to the latest weather report from 2GB – 873-AM in Sydney, Australia, you lean over to your radio on the shelf, press a button on the front of the unit and within seconds, audio from 2GB is in the room.

Now any seasoned radio listener knows that you were using a conventional radio receiver could never happen. But in this technological age we live in, there is another way to listen instant radio stations from all over the globe – Internet Radio. Through this medium, the possibilities are nearly endless.

I have been in the radio hobby for nearly 20 years and, while I enjoy chasing DX, I must admit I am more of a program content radio adcast listener than a DXer. So anything that can do to clean up the received signal from a radio is a plus in my book. Not to mention having the opportunity to listen to a distant station that I usually can't hear at all. And the Internet and a radio receiver from Tangent give me that plus.

The Tangent Quattro Internet radio is the first internet-capable member of the Tangent radio family of products, and it entered the marketplace in July 2007. Connecting to over 100 Internet radio stations is as simple as it isasurable with this tabletop radio.

What's Inside the Box

The Quattro was well packed in its display box. Our supplier C. ne further packed the unit into a shipping container and a professional job was done to ensure the unit arrived safe and undamaged. In addition to the Internet radio device (IRD), an AC-DC power wall wart, instruction book, and a 3.5mm audio cable were included.

The instruction book was extremely well written and very easy to follow. The 330-page guide comes from its numerous languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese).

The Quattro Internet radio receiver has a retro design look with distinctive Danish styling,

similar to other Tangent products. The unit we tested is housed inside a Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF) wood cabinet with real walnut veneer. It is available in four wood-like finishes – white, red, walnut veneer, and black.

This IRD measures 8.25-in W x 6.25-in H x 4.5-in D (210 x 111 x 145-mm) and is an ideal size for a bookshelf, counter top, coffee table or night stand. And the unit is lightweight, only 4.5 pounds. While the radio itself looks good, the AC-DC 1500 mA power adapter (aka wall wart) is a monster. It might be a bit hard to conceal in certain setups.

One of the more unusual aspects of the Quattro's design is its top-mounted speaker placement. The radio has a single, monophonic three-inch speaker, covered by a sturdy metal grille. The back of the unit features a one-inch rear fire speaker port that adds to the overall audio quality delivered by the unit. An alarm clock snooze button is located at the front of the top speaker.

All of the control functions for the Quattro are on the front panel. These controls include a large volume knob (left), a tuning knob that doubles for Internet and FM radio reception (right), a two-line, 2.5 inch, light blue backlit LCD display (center top), ten pill-sized push buttons for radio menu functions and presets (center bottom underneath the LCD screen) and two additional pill-sized push buttons for



power and select operation functions (left and right bottom respectively).

The LCD screen displays station, menu, and clock information. The screen was easy to read even in external light conditions, but things can get a bit cramped on station names received from the Reciva Internet portal. More on this service later.

On the rear of the radio, there is an RG-45 jack (for wired connection to the Internet, a recent addition to this model), three 3.5 mm stereo audio jacks (auxiliary input for an MP3 or CD player, headphone output, and line output), and a collapsible telescoping whip antenna for FM radio reception.

❖ It's what is under the hood that counts.

Once you flip through the pages of the Quattro manual, you begin to realize how capable this Internet radio really is. Not only can you listen to services streaming audio on the Internet with this unit, but it has a built-in FM tuner with RDS decoding capability for local area station reception.

The radio has a menu option to change the display language on the LCD. Languages sup-



MT Rating [4-3/4 stars]



SPECIFICATIONS

Connection:

Wired – RJ-45 Ethernet input jack for direct connection to a router

WiFi: – 802.11b and 802.11g compatible

Security: Works with both unsecured and secured networks. Offers 128-bit (max) WEP security and also supports WPA encryption WPA1 and WPA2).

Speaker: Built-in full range 3-inch dynamic speaker

Volume Output: 5 Watt RMS

Radio Frequency Range: 80-20,000 Hz

Radio Formats: Supports Real Audio, MP3, Windows media streams, OGG vorbis, AAC, WAV, AIFF or AU File formats

FM Tuner: Built-in FM tuner with RDS capability

Connections:

.5mm jack for stereo analog audio headphone output

.5mm jack for stereo analog audio AUX input for MP3 devices.

.5mm jack for stereo analog audio Line output

Power Supply: 12 VDC 1500 mA (via supplied AC-DC adapter)

Weight: 4.5 lbs

Dimensions: 8.25 W x 6.25 H x 4.5 D. (210 x 111 x 45-mm)

Price: US\$349.95. Designed and developed in Denmark. Made in China.

your PC or Mac.

Via the Reciva portal, the Quattro radio can browse radio stations by location and genre to find your favorite radio stations that can then be added to one of the six presets. The Quattro takes full advantage of the Reciva.com portal features. There is no subscription fee and you don't even have to turn on your computer to use this IRD.

The Tangent Quattro works with both open and encrypted WiFi networks, and has no difficulty remembering WEP and WPA security passwords. If you don't expect to be moving the radio between multiple wireless networks, setting up the radio for wireless operation is quite easy and well documented in the manual.

Configuring the Tangent Quattro to stream music from another computer is a little more involved. While I was successful in getting that function to work, it does require that you use the manual's instruction precisely in order to stream your favorite music. I found an excellent instruction page on the C. Crane website at www.ccrane.com/radios/wifi-radios/tangent-quattro-wifi-internet-radio.aspx that helped enable this feature. As of this writing, the Tangent Quattro will not stream DRM-protected AAC and WMA files, so don't expect your iTunes or Rhapsody music purchases to be compatible.

An Updated Version

The early release of the radio had some issues and lack of features that initial reviewers took exception to. Fortunately most of those issues have now been addressed by the manufacturer and are included in the unit that I purchased.

One of the major complaints of the early units was no capability for wired interface with the internet. You had to have a wireless network to use the radio. Tangent has now added an RG-45 jack so that the unit can be connected to the internet via a router or modem. You still have the wireless interface capability if you want to monitor your favorite stations via this type of connection.

The Quattro now has six preset buttons instead of the original five. This is a very useful feature to get you connected quickly to your favorite stations on the net. Beyond those six favorites, an unlimited number of favorite stations and internet audio streams can be set up through the Reciva portal. These include not only broadcast stations, but I also have several public safety and air traffic control audio streams listed in my favorite list that I can call up when the mood hits me. It is fun listening to various public safety agencies from around the country any time day or night.

Overall Rating and Final Thoughts

Those of you who have read this column in the past know that no electronic device is perfect, at least in my book. My biggest complaint with the Quattro was the lack of tone controls. I really would like to have some treble and bass control of the streamed audio. But even without that set of tone controls, I really like the audio provided by this unit. The 5 watt amplifier feeding the top fire and back fire speakers really can

fill up a room with loud, rich-sounding audio. Most reviewers and users agree that the Quattro has the best audio of any Internet Radio in the marketplace today.

We found the alarm clock function on the Tangent Quattro to be useful and easy to program; however, I don't recommend it as a viable alarm clock solution. Casually listening to Internet radio broadcasts is one thing, but depending on your Wi-Fi connection to wake you up for work could be a bit problematic, especially in areas where power generation is questionable.

Our only real frustration with the Tangent Quattro occurred when Internet radio streams dropped out momentarily in order to rebuffer the audio. While the radio stream drop-outs have more to do with the speed of our Internet connection and the reliability of our Wi-Fi router, it's a problem that all Internet radio receivers are plagued with and that potential customers should be aware of.

Bottom line, the Tangent Quattro's small size, audio quality, and design quality more than make up for any shortcomings that I have listed above.

The real payoff using this unit was the gratification of exploring the world's Internet radio broadcasts. If you're a radio nut whose idea of heaven is listening to a live broadcast from BBC World Service or the Cook Islands, then the Tangent Quattro is just the right device for you. So if you have a high-speed Internet connection and an insatiable appetite for radio, make sure you've got a real comfortable chair, because you may end up listening for a really long, enjoyable time.



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